



Montgomery County Council

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COUNCIL GIVES GO-AHEAD FOR STRATHMORE CENTER; PRIVATE SECTOR TO PAY MORE MAINTENANCE COSTS

The Montgomery County Council today approved \$3.3 million to complete construction of the Strathmore Hall Arts Center while requiring the Strathmore Hall Foundation to defray \$3.6 million over ten years in maintenance costs that would otherwise have been borne by the County.

"This is a great day for Montgomery County. We are going to move ahead on a world-class performing arts center and we are doing it while making sure the taxpayer comes out even while the private sector assumes more responsibility for funding," said Councilmember George Leventhal, chair of the Health & Human Services Committee, who worked closely with the County Executive and Councilmember Tom Perez to address the problem.

"The County is doing more on construction and the private sector is going to have to do a little more to defray maintenance and utilities."

Strathmore construction was approved by the County Council in 2000, subject to an absolute cap on County spending of \$44.6 million – half the estimated cost, with the State of Maryland picking up the difference. The cap came after estimates of the center's cost had already climbed from \$50 million to \$68 million to \$89 million. In November the County Executive asked the Council to approve a supplemental appropriation for \$7.6 million to cover cost overruns.

The resolution appropriates \$3.3 million for completion of the center, with an accompanying resolution requiring the Strathmore Hall Foundation to assume responsibility for a portion of existing County funding commitments for maintenance and utilities over the next ten years.

The Strathmore Hall Foundation, which will operate the facility, would reimburse the County for maintenance costs over the following schedule: FY 2006, \$50,000; FY07, \$150,000; FY08, \$250,000; FY09, \$400,000; FY10, \$500,000; FY11, \$550,000; FY12, \$550,000; FY13, \$550,000; and FY14, \$600,000 – for a total of \$3.6 over the next ten years.

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“In these tough budget times, we have to make sure we can meet many competing claims on County resources – for needs such as schools, traffic congestion relief, services for our most vulnerable citizens, and public safety,” said Councilmember Tom Perez. “This approach will enable us to open Strathmore without a dime more being paid by the taxpayers, who have paid out \$90 million to cover 100 percent of the construction costs.”

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